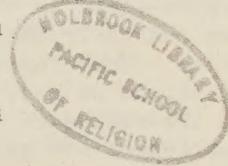


No. 440 - Oct. 12, 1973

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CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN CHINA:
NOTES FROM A THREE-WEEK VISIT

by Kentaro Shiozuki

Mr. Shiozuki, Associate General Secretary of the Japan YMCA, entered China on August 14 and spent 23 days visiting Kwangchow, Peking, Tachai (the model commune), Sian, Yenan, Nanking and Shanghai. He went as a member of a Japanese delegation consisting of representatives of 13 youth organizations, including the YMCA (which he represented), the YWCA, the Tokyo Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Farmers' Cooperative and the Japan Communist Youth League. Their host was the All-China Communist Youth League but, since the league is in the process of reorganization following dissolution at the time of the Great Cultural Revolution, the delegation was formally invited and received by the China-Japan Friendship Association. In the following special report for JCAN, Shiozuki reflects on the major currents of change sweeping across the world's largest country, including the on-going debate about the relationship between Christianity and Maoism. --Eds.

When we entered China, it had been nearly one year since diplomatic relations were re-established between Peking and Tokyo, ending many years of unfortunate relations between the two countries. We were happy to celebrate this first anniversary and we found the Chinese leaders, in the midst of intensified confrontation with the USSR, very eager to strengthen friendly relations with the Japanese people.

In addition to formal meetings with our hosts, we had a very busy schedule visiting people's communes, factories, schools and nurseries, Peking University, markets, museums, hospitals, and clinics, private homes, shops, famous parks and even an air-raid shelter in Peking. Most of the time we traveled as a group, but I also had the great pleasure of personally visiting the home of Dr. and Mrs. K. H. Ting of Nangking Theological Seminary. I also had stimulating personal talks with Li Shou-pao, Associate General Secretary of the National YMCA; his wife, Shih Ju Chang, Associate General Secretary of the National YWCA; and Miss Garluch, a former staff member of the USA-YWCA who has been working for the Shanghai government for many years.

Judging from fragmental news reports before the trip, I understood that the Great Cultural Revolution was in the process of readjustment, especially with the re-instatement of some key leaders who had been removed from top positions at the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. However, I found that, on the whole, the spirit of Cultural Revolution is alive and being emphasized everywhere.

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JCAN Oct. 12 * Perhaps the major change is that the real meaning and
p. 2 (94) * objectives of the Cultural Revolution have become clearer
* * * * * and closer to the people. Under the leadership of Chairman
Mao, the Communist Party struggle over political and
ideological lines was initiated by young, grass-roots people--and these
people still have the initiative, but on a broader and deeper level now.

The most impressive thing to me is the changes taking place in the minds and hearts of men and women through their participation in the revolutionary changes. Many of the people we met--old and young, men and women, farmers and workers--gave us the impression not only that they know what is happening to them and their society but also that they are confident and excited about the future. The clarity of purpose, dedication and optimism was shared by the Christians we met, even though the Christians still seem unsure about how to see the relevance of the Christian message to the on-going extraordinary experiences and self-understanding of the people.

Some Christians say that the role of the church is to help Christians to better understand and appreciate Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. They are positively participating in the process of self-transformation of man according to the socialist viewpoint, and they claim strong Biblical support for the freedom from bondage and the selfless service to others that are cornerstones of Maoism. They say that if Christianity has a "low posture" in Chinese society today, it's partly because the revolution in society has accomplished many of the goals which the Chinese churches had.

Other Christian leaders feel that the church should serve those people who don't find all the answers, or who don't find ultimate concern, in Maoism.

When the Cultural Revolution began, many Christians, like others, were terribly shocked. By the time of my visit, the shock had been replaced by a positive feeling about directions taken since the Cultural Revolution. Even those Christians who disagree on the role of the church in society agree that much of the church's preaching has been realized in the revolution: the urban, intellectual, Western-oriented grip on the church has been broken; the "from the top down" approach of Christianity has been altered; pure book-learning by seminarians is giving way to open contact with the people in the fields and factories; and the stress of the Cultural Revolution on removing contradictions between principles and actions has served to narrow the gap between preaching and practice.

If the church has lost some of its old "missionary zeal" it has also gained new self-understanding and a new openness to the community. I was impressed with the way most church buildings, including YMCA and YWCA facilities and former missionary housing, are being rented out for neighborhood uses. Even though most traditional forms of Christian service and activity have been suspended, and are not likely to begin again in the near future, church leaders are neither worried nor in a hurry to come up with new forms.

Because the church is still being transformed by the revolution, it is not yet sure what to say to society. In some ways China today is like Israel at the time of Moses. Christian leaders in China are full of patience--and they ask the same of Christians abroad. They suggest that Christians overseas get beyond concern over the number of Christians, the kinds of church services or the level of religious freedom in China and patiently concern themselves with understanding the whole context of the transformed society in which the church functions. Only in this way, they say, can Christians understand all that Maoism has to contribute to Christianity and vice versa.

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--Continuing the Revolution--

When we look at China in this broader context, we can see that the "attacks" on religious institutions, museums and traditional cultural values, while it was one objective of the Cultural Revolution was neither the main objective nor the emphasis. In fact, such restrictions have been more positive than negative; they have been more liberating than suppressive. For example, the contents of the political and ideological education, regardless of specific terms and expressions, had strong "religious overtones", as in its appeals for non-material incentives to work and in the emphasis on the dignity and equality of man.

By radically changing their economic base and spiritual foundation, the Chinese people are reshaping the structure of human thought, values and customs. The question now is one of continuing this human revolution. At this point, the Chinese have evaluated the Soviet model and found it lacking: they conclude that the Russians have failed to maintain a true socialist viewpoint because, over a 56-year period with the same social structure, they have ignored the need for the permanent ongoing human revolution.

One of the major concerns of the present leaders is how to educate the generation under 25-years-old which did not experience the 1949 revolution. In order to carry on "permanent revolution," the leaders are convinced that this younger generation must fully appreciate the initial revolutionary spirit. To accomplish this purpose older people, especially those who were once the poorest farmers and workers, are asked to talk to the children and young people in schools and factories about the miseries of pre-revolution life and about the great changes that took place in their life thanks to the leadership of Chairman Mao. The Communist Party and the Communist Youth League are expected to be an institutionalized witness to the great things that happened to the Chinese people and to be vanguard to carry through the revolution.

How the Chinese people can manage to preserve the same revolutionary spirit from generation to generation, I don't know. But at present the people are very determined and confident about the future. The material achievement, in both agricultural production and industrial development, is most impressive. Even though the people's way of living is still very simple, I feel that China is now ready for another Great Leap Forward, this time with some industrial and technological cooperation with the western world.

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1973 ON JAPAN'S CAMPUSES: 'QUIET AND CHILLY'

One common criticism of journalism is that "noise and violence" makes headlines and "peace and quiet" rarely rate a short story. In this regard, the JCAN editors recalled the spectacular headlines about Japanese college students during the violent upheavals on most campuses in 1968-69--and tried to recall if we'd seen any good coverage of the campus mood since then. We hadn't, and we asked Editorial Board member Jintaro Ueda, Associate Director of the NCC Division of Service, to do the story. The following report draws heavily on the experiences and analysis of Takero Tejima, Secretary of the Student YMCA.

--Eds.

A kind of political apathy, a great diversification of interests, and an escape from group discipline--these are the major phenomena that apply to college campuses across Japan today. The same phenomena were evident in 1970 and 1971, in reaction to the huge upheavals that gripped the campuses earlier

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***** and led to extreme politicization of the student movements.

But the apathy of today is different: it is not in reaction to anything; it is simply part of normal college life, a more or less cynical acceptance of things as they are by a new generation of students who know no other way of college life.

Granted, there are occasional incidents of violent confrontations on college campuses today. But the struggles are among the radical sects themselves. There are no clashes between student demonstrators and the police; the so-called Establishment is functioning in a relaxed manner; and the inter-sect rivalries fail to draw much student interest let alone the attention of the wider public.

Where have the students gone? The various student association and clubs--which flourished along every possible line of interest in recent years--have lost both their vitality and their memberships. Interests remain, but the students pursue them individually rather than in groups. Does this mean that students are concentrating more on their academic studies? Never!

At the same time, according to Tejima, there is a deep-rooted thirst for the meaning of life even though the thirst is not yet fully articulated. Every student feels an over-riding sense of crisis in an overwhelmingly materialistic society. However, there is also the feeling that stepping in and involving oneself in some problem is "unrealistic." One of the most popular student expressions for this kind of psychology is shirakeru, literally "to get chilly." Anything which requires sincere concentration and continuous effort appears shirakeru--somehow ineffective, inappropriate or just naive.

Christian students by and large share the same feeling and posture towards society as a whole. Until the student revolt exploded in 1968 and 1969, there was a frame of reference in the thinking of Christian students who tried to live by their faith. This frame of reference was expressed in the words "Church and Society," "Faith and Culture" and "the Gospel and the World." Furthermore, there used to be a sense of Christian community, or what might be called a Christian ethos, which supported this framework. But during the period of student revolt and struggles within the Church, first the total frame of reference completely collapsed and then the ethos seemed to fade away. In this sense, every Christian individual today is thrown into the midst of cynicism and materialism, which have never provided any positive value but which, for students today, are still far from nihilism.

This present mood was apparent in the theme of the Student YMCA's annual summer conference held in August. The theme was "The Basis of the Autonomous Self." To go back to the autonomous self was thought of as perhaps the only possible means today to find something trustworthy.

However, all is not apathy, cynicism and materialism for all time: Tejima predicts that the present spiritual situation will last a couple more years, until students seek a larger sense of direction and meaning in life, including, for Christians, a renewed sense of liberation and social responsibility.

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YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL: ALIVE AND KICKING

In spite of the opposition party attempts to have the Diet withdraw the Yasukuni Shrine Bill, the Liberal Democratic Party used its majority position at the last moment of the Diet session to get "carry over" status for the bill. Normally this means that the bill will have a priority position at the next session.

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However, the situation is complicated by a deal between LDP Chancellor Maeo and the opposition parties. Last summer the opposition parties strongly protested the LDP's unilateral extension of the Diet Session. They agreed to return to the Diet only because Maeo promised never to present any new bill at the extended session without the consent of all parties. To ease the opposition's protest, Maeo promised this time to "freeze" - not to bring it to the floor until all parties agreed to do so - the carried-over Yasukuni Bill.

Despite this, both the opposition parties and the media judge the two actions as a nominal gain for the LDP and a real gain for the opposition. However, the National Christian Council's Yasukuni Committee (in a statement issued on Sept. 29, the day after the session ended), said the actions mean "three steps advance and one step retreat" for the LDP. The statement said that Maeo's proposal of "freeze" is a mere gentleman's agreement which has no legal binding power. Even if the freeze is maintained in the next session, the fact remains that the bill is now officially on the agenda of the National Diet. The statement called for further united action to prevent the passage of the bill.

Opposition to the bill was one of the items of hot debate during the Lutheran Northeast Asia Regional Consultation on Evangelism and Church Growth held in Tokyo September 10-15. Following a tour of Yasukuni Shrine, the Rev. Lin A Lien of Taiwan questioned the Japanese church's opposition to the shrine bill as "legalistic and unevangelical." Rather than a negative confrontation, he pointed out the need to comfort those who have lost loved ones through war. Prof. Tokuzen answered this criticism by explaining the viewpoint of Japanese Christians.

"As you know," he said, "we caused you and your peoples great suffering in the past, especially during World War II. Now for our government to officially support the shrine for the war dead not only abrogates separation of church and state but also gives moral approval for past aggression and gives moral support to Japan's rearmament. We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We want discontinuity with a mistaken past."

Several other Chinese and Korean delegates expressed their gratitude for this clear expression by Christians in Japan.

Meanwhile at Ise Shrine, where the ancestor of the Emperor's family is enshrined, a new shrine was dedicated in a solemn ceremony which takes place every twenty years. Wide media coverage of the dedication, which far surpassed that of twenty years ago, served as a serious warning to people concerned about the revival of national Shintoism.

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SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF KOREAN WOMEN PROTESTED

The NCC Women's Committee, in response to an appeal from Korean Church Women United, has launched a campaign to expose and to halt the sexual exploitation of South Korean women by money-laden Japanese male tourists.

The appeal from the KUCW was made during the early July joint meeting of the NCCs of Japan and Korea in Seoul. It said that Christian women in South Korea were "greatly concerned" about the way some Japanese men are making some Korean women "slaves to sex".

"There are people who are using their economic superiority to gain their desires, and this is causing the destruction of human dignity." said the KUCW
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JCAN Oct. 12 * SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF KOREAN WOMEN (continued from page 5)
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***** statement. "We urge the church leaders of both Korea and Japan to concern themselves with this problem of dehumanization..... We see the buying and selling of people as disgracing them by making them into economic animals."

The Women's Committee of the NCC Japan issued a statement, printed in several Japanese newspapers, calling attention to the behavior of Japanese tourists in South Korea and saying "We are ashamed of our Japanese men." The committee then began direct appeals to travel agencies which advertise "Enjoy Korea With Beautiful Girls" and "Korea--Men's Haven" and which arrange tours consisting of 90 per cent married Japanese men unaccompanied by their wives.

As part of this campaign, the committee visited Toshio Nishio, president of the Japan Association of Travel Agents, on October 1. The women explained the purpose of their public statement, emphasized the dehumanization of prostitution and asked for self-restriction by Japanese travel agents.

According to Akiko Yamaguchi, the committee's Executive Secretary, Nishio very gentlemanly responded that, yes, it was too bad about Japanese tourists in Korea and elsewhere, but no, there was very little he could do about it: that South Korean travel agents did most of the arrangements for girls and that Japanese travel agents couldn't do much to restrict the wishes of paying customers.

Nishio suggested that perhaps the only solution to the problem would be a long-term one--better "moral education" for Japanese youth. When the women claimed that the travel agents were presently guilty of complicity with open prostitution, Nishio failed to understand the logic.

As a result, the committee is now planning talks with leaders of the union of tour group guides, in order to appeal to them not to aid and abet prostitution in the course of their work.

The committee members are also considering the problem of language ("prostitutes") and the problem of law ("arrest prostitutes") which imply that only the woman is at fault in such an arrangement. In addition, the committee members are aware that a relationship exists between male prejudice against women and Japanese prejudice against Koreans--and that both factors seem to be operating in the booming Japanese tourist business in South Korea.

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BRIEFLY NOTED:

--The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier Midway (see June 29 JCAN) arrived at Yokosuka Navy Base October 5 and will be "home-ported" there for at least three years. Anti-home-porting demonstrations, led by the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, labor unions, Beheiren, and radical student groups, increased steadily in the week before the Midway arrived, with an estimated 30,000 demonstrators in the streets by October 7. The protesters opposed the build-up of U.S. Navy fire-power in the Western Pacific and expressed fear that the Midway's nuclear attack capability might be used from Japan's waters.

--During the just-concluded 71st session of the Diet, the proposed Alien Immigration Bill (see March 16 JCAN) was withdrawn. This is the fourth time that opposition forces have rallied to halt LDP passage of the controversial bill.

CORRECTIONS:

Page 4 of September 28 JCAN--Shincho Tabata should read Shinobu Tabata.

Page 5 of September 28 JCAN--Jin Masaike is on the Board of Directors of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.